

Defence conceals info in petition

Alleges prosecution in Azhar's war crimes case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution yesterday brought allegations of 'fraudulence' against the defence counsel of war crimes accused ATM Azharul Islam as the latter 'concealed information' in their petition.

The defence filed the petition with the International Crimes Tribunal-1 seeking permission to scrutinise the probe report prepared by the investigation officer (IO).

The tribunal also expressed its discontent over the defence's 'dilatatory tactics' in cross-examining the last prosecution witness SM Idris Ali, also the IO of the war crimes case.

It directed the defence to produce their witness before the court, if they were willing to do so, on Sunday.

Yesterday, defence counsel Abdus Subhan Tarafder spent time questioning Idris on topography of Rangpur.

At one stage, the tribunal asked him to cross-examine the IO on the incidents of 1971 rather than on topography as it would bring no good to the accused at the end of the day.

But the defence lawyer kept on cross-examining the IO about the distance and direction of different places in Rangpur.

Though Tarafder was supposed to complete the cross-examination by 12:00 noon, he completed it around 1:15pm and sought one more day.

As the tribunal did not entertain his prayer, the defence counsel said he had

two petitions which needed to be disposed of first before the completion of cross-examination.

The tribunal allowed him to move the petitions.

Tarafder then prayed to the court to allow him to look over the investigation report prepared against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Azharul as it is necessary for cross-examining the IO further.

Azhar, who is facing six charges of murder, genocide and crimes against humanity during the Liberation War, was present in the dock.

"Seeing the investigation report is necessary towards the end of the trial. I could not complete the cross-examination without going through the report," Tarafder said.

Saying that the defence got three weeks' time to prepare themselves for cross-examining the IO, Tribunal-1 Chairman Justice M Enayetur Rahim asked the defence lawyer why he had not placed the prayer at that time.

"Placing such petition at the fag end of cross-examination is nothing but (has been done with) mala fide intention as we have given you enough time," Justice Rahim told Tarafder.

In the other petition, the defence sought permission to cross-examine Idris regarding the contradiction between prosecution witnesses' depositions and their statements before the IO.

Terming the prayer an 'utmost dilatatory practice', prosecutor Zead Al

Malum drew attention of the tribunal to its 28th order in the case passed on March 3 this year.

"In that order, the defence is permitted to inspect the investigation report. But in their latest petition, they did not mention it. They hid the matter before the tribunal," he said.

Jumping out of his chair, Tarafder told the tribunal that they could not look over the investigation report 'thoroughly'.

"You have suppressed the matter in the petition," said Justice Anwarul Haque, a member of the three-member tribunal.

The tribunal chairman outright rejected the two petitions and asked the defence counsel to continue cross-examination.

Tarafder then prayed to the tribunal to allow him more time.

The tribunal also asked him whether he would be able to complete the cross-examination if given one more hour.

"I will try my best," Tarafder replied. But the tribunal found his answer vague.

Justice Rahim said so much opportunity had been given to the defence but they had wasted the court's time on unnecessary matters during cross-examination.

The tribunal then asked Tarafder to produce the witness of the defence, who had earlier submitted a list of 12 witnesses before the court.

Dhaka's growing engagement with Delhi positive

Says US envoy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States sees Bangladesh's growing engagement with major global players like India as positive and wants friendly relations between Bangladesh and India as partners in the interest of ensuring peace in South Asia.

This was stated by US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Desai Biswal in New Jersey and US Ambassador Dan Mozena in Dhaka.

They consider Indo-Bangladesh relations as a good thing that brings gain for everyone.

Biswal, while speaking at an Indian diaspora community forum on July 2 on US-India relations following the formation of the new Indian government, said Washington wanted to see relations between Bangladesh and India flourish as partners in combating terrorism.

Robert Menendez, Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also spoke on the occasion.

Diplomatic sources quoted Biswal as saying she hoped Bangladesh's relations with India would be further strengthened in the greater interest of ensuring peace, stability and development in South Asia.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Mozena during his meeting with Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque yesterday highly appreciated Bangladesh's engagement with India and praised Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's three-day visit to Bangladesh.

Mozena discussed a wide range of issues with Haque, but meeting sources said the main focus of the conversation was Swaraj's visit and its outcome.

The Foreign Secretary told Mozena that Swaraj's visit was very positive and both countries had reached agreements to work together on a variety of issues, including trade and investment, security, connectivity, border management, water, power, development cooperation, etc.

During the hour-long meeting, Mozena also talked about the premier's recent visit to Japan and China and his own visit to the US along with a young business delegation from Bangladesh.

Mozena and Haque also discussed the statement issued by US Trade Representative Michael Froman, which found Bangladesh still behind schedule in meeting commitments to address workers' rights and safety issues.

After the meeting, Mozena told reporters that the US wanted Bangladesh to become a premium and preferred brand in the global apparel market.

He said Bangladesh had prospects to become the world's number one RMG exporter and added that incidents like the Rana Plaza building collapse and Tazreen fire should not take place again and Bangladesh needed to ensure that.

Asked about his meeting with the Foreign Secretary, the US envoy said the meeting was part of the US's continuous dialogue with Bangladesh and a wide range of issues were discussed.

French revolution seeks

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across their front pages and broadcasts, Deschamps must conquer the fears of an entire nation if he is to restore his country's World Cup eminence.

France, who have scored 10 goals in four matches in Brazil, have already gone a long way to restoring some pride after their hapless first round exit in 2010.

Reaching the last eight with solid teamwork has already done much to rebuild their image but facing the Germans in a knockout game is motivation in itself.

They have only excruciating memories of their last two World Cup battles against them, losing a nerve-racking semifinal in 1982 in Spain.

After scoring twice to lead 3-1 in extra time they conceded two goals and crashed out on penalties in what has become known as 'Seville '82'.

Germany keeper Toni Schumacher's reckless challenge on France's Patrick Battiston which left the player with broken ribs, an injured vertebrae and shattered teeth, further added to the bitterness of that loss.

Four years later it was again the Germans who killed off their world Cup dreams with a 2-0 victory in Mexico.

For Germany, it has been 24 years since their third and most recent World Cup crown.

They have come close in the past two tournaments, reaching the last four but stumbled at the penultimate hurdle.

After a laboured extra time 2-1 win over Algeria in the round of 16, the Germans are facing mounting pressure from their fans, desperate to see an end of their title drought.

"You get games like that in a tournament and you just have to battle your way through," said Germany coach Joachim Loew. "In a tournament you cannot always play fantastic football."

A question mark hangs over Loew's shaky defence and how it will react to its biggest test so far in the tournament, with France's Karim Benzema, Olivier Giroud and Antoine Griezmann posing a far bigger threat than the Desert foxes attack.

Brazil are under intense pressure to breathe life into their World Cup campaign and produce a performance worthy of champions when they face Colombia and their free-scoring

midfielder James Rodriguez in Friday's quarterfinal.

After their laboured win over Chile in a penalty shootout in their last match, the Brazilians have been berated by their fans and former players. Among them is none other than Zico, their great playmaker from the 1980s.

"The fact is that we are lacking a proper game plan," he wrote in a column in British newspaper the Guardian.

Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has taken such criticism in his stride.

"It's normal that they [the fans and the media] are demanding," he said.

"We're facing up to our difficulties and we'll see if we can improve our balance in the next game from start to finish, and not have the ups and downs that we had in the previous games."

Striker Neymar, scorer of four of Brazil's eight World Cup goals, is nursing a thigh injury picked up against the Chileans but looks certain to start.

Scolari's biggest selection headache is in midfield, where Luiz Gustavo is suspended after being booked against Chile. Ramirez is his most likely replacement.

In stark contrast to the angst-ridden Brazilians, the Colombians seem to be enjoying every minute of their best ever World Cup campaign.

They have won all four matches, scoring 11 goals in the process and conceding just two.

In Rodriguez, they have produced one of the revelations of the competition. He has scored five, including a contender for goal of the tournament in a 2-0 defeat of Uruguay in the last round.

"There's no point in just stopping James. We need to stop the whole Colombian team." Scolari said. "They're a team that plays easily, nice football, they are calm and organised."

History is firmly on Brazil's side.

In their 25 previous meetings Colombia have won just twice and the last time was 23 years ago, before the baby-faced Rodriguez was even born.

The five-times champions have not lost a competitive match on home soil since 1975, when Peru beat them 3-1 in the Copa America.

That remarkable record will be put to the test in Fortaleza's Estadio Castelao on Friday as perhaps never

Modi orders govt office cleanups

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The vast quadrangle at the centre of a sprawling complex of ministerial offices in Delhi has become a rubbish dump for broken furniture, discarded water coolers, broken air conditioners, abandoned telephones and large bags of discarded paper.

Nearby, two clerks from India's ministry of women and child welfare wheel piles of brown, bedraggled office files on swivel chairs toward a waiting van bound for the central records office. Inside, another keys into a computer the details of several more files before they too are sent for storage.

On orders from the new prime minister, bureaucrats are busy clearing rooms, corridors and staircases of the rubbish accumulated by previous administrations over the last 67 years, especially useless paper files and broken furniture.

"All ministries are supposed to review and reorganise their offices every four years, but nobody bothered, and old files and broken furniture just piled up everywhere," said the clerk.

TK 140CR GRAFT Bank director remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court yesterday placed Mohammad Solaiman, director of Shahjalal Islami Bank Limited, on seven-day remand in connection with a corruption case filed against him on the charge of misappropriating Tk 140 crore.

Rejecting the bail prayer for Solaiman, the Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate Mashiur Rahman Chowdhury passed the order when Solaiman was produced before the court at around 2:00pm.

Meanwhile, a number of persons accompanying Solaiman obstructed journalists from taking snaps and video footages while he was being taken to the court premises at around 2:00pm. At one stage, they also assaulted three journalists -- Shafique Ahmed Sajib, reporter of private television channel Channel-24, Ahmed Kutub, reporter of national daily Samakal, and Mohammad Rashed, photojournalist of Samakal.

On April 13, Rashed Sarwar, branch manager of the bank's Jubilee Road Branch, filed the case with Kotwali Police Station accusing four persons, including Solaiman, of misappropriating Tk 140 crore loan facilities to SK Steel, and transferring Tk 18.65 crore of this amount to the account of his own business organisation Paradise Corporation Ltd, said Mahmudul Haque Mahmud, public prosecutor (PP) of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The other accused include ANM Jahangir, former branch manager of the bank's Jubilee Road Branch, Enamul Haque, chairman of Paradise Corporation Ltd, and Anisul Haque, director of Paradise Corporation Ltd.

The case was later transferred to ACC, said the PP, adding that the rest of the accused are now on the run.

On June 25, an ACC team, led by SM Rafiqul Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, arrested Solaiman from Akram Tower in Bijoy Nagar of the capital.

Nizami fit

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Nizami was also shifted to his designated cell from the jail hospital, he added.

Nizami, a former minister during the BNP-led four-party government, faces 16 charges, including genocide committed during the Liberation War in 1971. He, however, has pleaded not guilty before the court.

Unlike any other war crimes cases, Nizami's trial has taken around four years, including pre-trial investigation, thanks to the defence's "dilatatory tactics", the prosecution's "lack of preparation" and long vacancy in the chairman's post of the tribunal-1.

'Specific threat' of attack at Kampala airport: US embassy

AFP, Kampala

The US embassy in Uganda warned yesterday of a "specific threat" by an unknown group to attack the international airport serving the capital Kampala.

The alert came as travellers flying to the United States from Europe and the Middle East faced tighter security because of new concerns about the development of explosives that could circumvent airport security.

"The US embassy has received information from the Uganda police force that according to intelligence sources there is a specific threat to attack Entebbe International Airport by an unknown terrorist group today, July 3rd, between the hours of 2100-2300 (1800 GMT to 2000 GMT)," the statement said.

"But now that Narendra Modi has ordered it, ministers and top officers do the rounds at 9am every day, personally supervising the cleanup and reorganisation drive."

Modi has been prime minister for exactly a month, not long enough to judge whether he can deliver on his campaign promise of good governance. But with his obsession for order and cleanliness, he has been able to energise bureaucrats to take ownership of their working space to make it more presentable – and potentially more productive.

Like a stern housekeeper, he has roamed from floor to floor in government buildings, casting disapproving glances at the litter, the sloth and the lack of discipline. He found one office filled with cigarette smoke, despite "no smoking" signs everywhere. In another, he saw dirty tea cups lying around. "He just mentioned them and walked out, but it was enough for us to get the message," a bureaucrat told a reporter.

Clean, well-ordered offices is not the only thing Modi is demanding from Delhi's bureaucrats. He also

wants them to come to work on time at 9am sharp, rely more on computers, abjure extended lunch and tea breaks to play cards in nearby parks (the junior ones) or golf at the club (an elite bunch of 200), say no to foreign junkets, be more responsive to the public and resist political interference by ministers and MPs.

The last instruction could be a potential gamechanger. The new prime minister has made it clear to the top bureaucrats in government that if they have a good proposal that is blocked by their own minister, they can pitch it directly to him (but only in a PowerPoint format please, since Modi hates reading long files and documents).

Modi's approach may seem to undermine the cabinet system of shared ministerial authority, but it has made top civil servants enthusiastic about work after a demoralising phase under the previous regime.

"The top, secretary-level officers are feeling empowered for the first time and are hoping Modi succeeds in putting the new system in place," said

JS sees debate over role

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during 1972-75.

At one stage of the chaotic situation, Badal repeatedly sought Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury's attention to give him protection.

Earlier, Firoz of the JP, the main opposition in parliament, launched a blistering attack on the Gono Bahini for its anarchic and destructive politics that left thousands of freedom fighters and Awami League, Juba League and Chhatra League men dead.

Raising his private member's resolution, Firoz proposed bringing up a list of BLF members, who received training in India during the Liberation War in 1971.

Firoz said the BLF was formed to resist any possible revolution after independence. "But Sirajul Alam Khan formed the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, leaving the BLF. The JSD and Gono Bahini later killed thousands of Chhatra League, Juba League and Awami League men."

Amid a thumping of desks by the treasury bench, Firoz added: "None would have dared to assassinate Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman if the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and Gono Bahini were not formed. But our prime

minister [Sheikh Hasina] has tolerated all these."

Leader of the House and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was present, was seen smiling.

Supporting the resolution, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haq thanked the JSD that they had been united to uphold the spirit of the Liberation War.

The resolution was accepted by voice vote.

Speaking on a point of order, Badal later said it was unfortunate the treasury bench was lambasting a component of the ruling alliance centring on a proposal of an opposition lawmaker.

Badal added the JSD had been a part of all democratic movements since its birth. "We don't claim everything we did was right... but history will analyse who was wrong and who was right."

Badal faced severe opposition from a number of treasury bench and JP lawmakers. AL senior MP Tofail Ahmed, among others, asked Badal to speak about the Gono Bahini.

At this stage, Badal sought protection from the Speaker. "I need protection from the Chair... He [Kazi Firoz] is talking without taking the floor."

The Speaker requested Firoz to sit down and allow Badal to continue.

PM hits back at BNP

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she said in her valedictory speech at the budget session of the 10th parliament.

People will not forget the brutalities the party had carried out before the January 5 polls, Hasina said.

The budget session of the 10th parliament ended yesterday with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury's urge to the treasury bench and opposition members to uphold democracy by participating in parliament proceedings.

The Tk 2,50,506 crore budget for 2014-15 fiscal year was passed in this session of parliament that began on June 3.

During her speech, Sheikh Hasina showed some terrible images of brutality carried out by the BNP-Jamaat before the 10th national elections.

She alleged that Khaleda Zia with the help of the Jamaat had tried to foil the January 5 elections, aiming to destroy the country's democracy.

The prime minister told the House that 16 policemen, two BGB men, two Ansar men and one soldier were killed during the BNP-Jamaat's violent movement.

Responding to Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad's allegation about the absence of justice in Narayanganj, Feni and Laxmipur, Hasina said: "We have taken top-down initiatives after the Feni, Narayanganj and Laxmipur incidents."

"But it is unfortunate that in every incident we have lost our people." She also vowed that miscreants, whoever they are, must be tried.

The Prime Minister severely criticised the BNP chief for blaming the Awami League (AL) for everything during an interview with an Indian newspaper.

The Leader of the House urged Khaleda Zia to see her own face in the mirror first before speaking to foreign media and blaming the AL.

"We always wanted a continuation of democratic practice in the country. But it is Ziaur Rahman who introduced arms and black money in politics," she said.

"Ershad also captured state power in the way Ziaur Rahman did," Hasina said, pointing at Ershad, who is currently special envoy to the prime minister.

Tofail disagrees

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suspend the trade benefit.

But speaking to The Daily Star by phone, Tofail said, "Bangladesh has made a lot of progress in the areas of labour rights and improvement of safety standards over the last one year. Still, the United States is saying that we need to improve a lot."

"Even the USAID [United States Agency for International Development] in a recent survey said that Bangladesh has progressed a lot on the issues of workplace safety and labour rights."

"During my last month's visit to the US, I have shown to some Congressmen the USAID report," the minister said.

According to him, the US is saying so in an excuse for not giving the GSP benefit to Bangladesh.

He also said the US was now making a "false claim" about torturing a worker in Bhaluka of Mymensingh.

"The claim of torturing the worker in Bhaluka is false. The victim is not a worker and he did not file any case in this regard yet," Tofail added.

It seems that the US will not give the trade benefit even if Bangladesh meets all the conditions, he said.

According to him, fulfilment of

some conditions is time consuming -- like inspection of buildings and enforcement of new laws in the export processing zones.

But the officials from the US can visit Bangladesh to see the progress made over the last one year, he said.

On Wednesday, US Trade Representative Michael Froman said, "The Obama administration has been engaging the Bangladesh government and stakeholders over the past year to press for changes to address the worker rights and worker safety issues."

"We are seeing some improvements that move us closer to our shared goal of protecting workers from another workplace tragedy such as the April 2013 Rana Plaza building collapse, including a significant increase in the registration of unions."

"However, we remain concerned about the large number of factories that have yet to be inspected, the lack of progress on needed labour law reforms, and continuing reports of harassment and violence against labour activists who are attempting to exercise their rights," Froman said in a statement.

Remittance fall

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Remittance receipts last saw negative growth in fiscal 2000-01, declining about 3 percent to \$1.88 billion year-on-year.

"Declining remittance is a big issue for the economy," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, additional research director at Centre for Policy Dialogue.

He referred to appreciation of the taka against the dollar and shrinking outflow of migrant workers as the two main reasons for the decline in remittance in 2013-14.

However, the good thing is that the situation is improving since March this year, he said.

Remittance grew 21.55 percent in June from the same month a year ago,

the data show.

Analysing data of the 10 months to April, the CPD said inward remittances from six major Middle East countries declined by 16.2 percent. Manpower export from Bangladesh also fell by 10.5 percent during the period, it said last month.

Inward remittances have helped Bangladesh stimulate economic growth for more than a decade.

According to a World Bank study, remittances augment consumption and investment, and thereby have an important role in stimulating the economy. It helps the economy maintain a stable balance of payments and current accounts.