

Doa, milad mahfil for Koko Friday

Wife leaves for KL for daughters' exams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There will be no Qulkhwani of Arafat Rahman Koko, a member of the BNP chief's media wing told The Daily Star last night.

Instead, special prayers and milad mahfils will be held at mosques across the country on Friday.

Younger son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Koko died of a cardiac arrest on January 24 at his rented house at Ampang, Kuala Lumpur where he along with his family members had been staying since late 2008.

Meanwhile, Syeda Sharmila Rahman, widow of Koko, and her two daughters left for Kuala Lumpur on Monday. They came to Dhaka on January 27 to attend his funeral.

"Sharmila had to leave Dhaka as her daughters will take exams soon," a close relative of the BNP chief told this correspondent.

Zafira Rahman and Zahiya Rahman are studying at an internationally reputed school in Kuala Lumpur in O-level and standard-IV.

Household gas

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need to raise the prices. The BERC may give its decision on the matter at the end of this month.

Given the current consumption rate, there are enough reserves to supply gas to households for the next 15 years even if no new gas field is discovered in the meantime.

Another distributor, Paschimanchal Gas Company Ltd, also placed a proposal at the hearing. The BERC's technical committee recommended a 5.59 percent tariff hike for the company.

The proposals from gas distribution companies aim at reducing consumers' reliance on piped gas and encouraging them to use liquefied petroleum gas.

Titas also proposed revising up gas prices for all its clients, including power plants, fertiliser factories, CNG refuelling stations, industries and tea estates.

Consumer rights activists and left-leaning politicians have opposed the Titas proposals. They say there is no need to raise the gas prices as the sector is making profits.

Ruhul Hossain Prince, member of the central committee of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, said gas tariff hike would encourage corruption in energy sector.

Zakir Hossain Nayan, adviser of the CNG Refuelling Station Owners' Association, said he couldn't understand why distribution companies proposed raising CNG tariff when the gas companies are making profits.

Significant

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health cannot be assessed in the allocated time for this rapid assessment, it said.

Oil tanker Southern Star-7 sank in the Shela river on December 9 spilling over 3.58 lakh litres of furnace oil, of which only 65.2 thousand litres was scooped up manually by the local communities, the report adds.

The team of experts from nine countries representing several UN organisations, government agencies and academics visited the Sundarbans for six days, two weeks after the spill.

It suggested the government to develop an action plan specifying all stakeholders, timelines and necessary resources and to conduct mid- and long-term monitoring; and recommended improvements in national oil spill preparedness and response, and in vessel traffic management through the forest.

The other recommendations include adoption and enactment of a national oil contingency plan and national oil pollution response regulations in accordance with international best practices, supporting locals who took part in oil collection and cleaning operation with health check-ups, and initiating a community health monitoring programme.

It also advised the government to "implement its obligations under the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC) Convention it has ratified and consider ratification of further international conventions related to oil pollution".

On aquatic resources, the report suggests midterm monitoring after six months of the spill and long-term monitoring for two years.

The mission also suggests monitoring mangrove system of spill-affected plants during the monsoon to see how the rains aid in flushing the remaining oil from the oil-soaked plants.

3 shot, held after daylight robbery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police shot and arrested three alleged robbers while the "criminals" were fleeing robbing a banker's house in the capital's Madhya Badda yesterday afternoon.

The arrestees are Pear Hossain, 30, Shahidul Islam, 32, and Shakil, 25. They were admitted to Pangu Hospital.

Some seven to eight robbers pressed the doorbell of a private bank official's flat on the first floor of a five-storey building at Gudaraghat around 2:00pm, said Abdul Jalil, officer-in-charge of Badda Police Station.

When the door was opened, the "criminals" entered the flat and tied the hands and legs of those inside with rope and kept them confined to the bathroom. They then looted valuables, including Tk 2.60 lakh in

cash, \$3,000 and gold ornaments, from the house.

On information, police rushed to the spot. As the law enforcers were trying to nab the "robbers", the "criminals" threw cocktails at them. Police then opened fire, injuring the three men.

Police seized a private car, sharp weapons, bullets and a magazine from their possession.

The banker, who is a managing director, was outside the house at that time.

During preliminary interrogation, Shahidul, driver of the bank official, confessed that he took the robbers to the scene, saying there was around Tk 10-12 lakh in the house, the police official claimed.

Two more people were detained later over the robbery attempt.

SSC exams in hartal trap

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against them, repression on journalists, control of media and the government's interference with the judiciary."

Some senior BNP leaders had earlier hinted at enforcing more hartals in phases in addition to the ongoing blockade to force the government to hold an early national election.

STUDENTS, GUARDIANS WORRIED The second deferment of the exams has deepened the worries of students and guardians. They are concerned about whether the exams would be completed amid the ongoing political unrest.

Zahanara Begum of Mirpur-2 said, "My son started crying as he heard about the deferment of tomorrow's [Wednesday's] exams."

A student of Dhanmondi Govt Laboratory High School, her son asked her how he would prepare himself for the exams if they are deferred one after another.

MINISTER BRIEFS PRESS

Speaking at a press conference at his ministry, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday once again called upon the opposition alliance not to extend its shutdown.

"We believe everyone's sense of

humanity is not lost yet. So we hope the hartal will not be extended further for the sake of humanity," he said.

Students are facing uncertainty amid the indefinite blockade that has already devastated them mentally, added the minister.

Referring to the return of late Arafat Rahman Koko's two daughters -- Zafira Rahman and Zahia Rahman -- to Malaysia to take exams, Nahid urged BNP chief Khaleda Zia to withdraw the hartal.

The two along with their mother Syeda Sharmila Rahman went back to Malaysia on Monday to avoid any disruptions in their studies.

CASE AGAINST KHALEDA

AB Siddique, president of Bangladesh Jananetri Parishad, a pro-Awami League platform, on Monday sued Khaleda and three others for allegedly masterminding and instigating the violence that killed 42 people during the blockade.

The other accused are BNP standing committee member Rafiqul Islam Mia, Vice-chairman Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury and pro-BNP intellectual Prof Emajuddin Ahmed.

A Dhaka court later asked the Gulshan police to probe the charges.

UN court dismisses

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ethnic-Serb Krajina area, forcing about 200,000 people from their homes.

Speaking in court yesterday, Judge Peter Tomka dismissed both the Croatian claim and the Serbian counter-claim.

Forces on both sides had carried out violent acts during the war, Judge Tomka said. However, neither side had provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate the "specific intent required for acts of genocide".

Croatia filed its initial case with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1999, accusing Serbs, led by President Slobodan Milosevic, of targeting ethnic Croats during the conflict.

It wanted Serbia to pay compensation for damages "to persons and properties as well as to the Croatian economy and environment".

In 2010, Serbia responded to Croatia's case with a countersuit, saying that ethnics Serbs were expelled when Croatia launched its 1995 operation to retake territory captured by Serbs.

The BBC's Anna Holligan in The Hague says although genocide is the most serious of international crimes, it is also the hardest to prove.

"What is generally called ethnic cleansing does not constitute genocide," Judge Tomka said in his ruling against Serbia's claim.

"Acts of ethnic cleansing may be part of a genocidal plan but only if there is an intention to physically destroy the target group."

Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic earlier described the verdict as "one of perhaps the most important events for our bilateral relations with Croatia".

"It will probably be the end of a process that has lasted for 15-20 years [and] will put an end to both sides' fight to prove who the worst criminal is," he told reporters on Sunday.

Croatian Justice Minister Orsat Miljenic previously said the government's main goal was to "present what happened in the war and that was aggression against Croatia".

Relations between the two countries have improved in recent years but in 2012 Serbia was outraged when Operation Storm commander Ante Gotovina was cleared on appeal by the International

UN 1948 GENOCIDE CONVENTION

Act committed with intent to destroy in whole or part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group

Killing members of the group

Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group

Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring physical destruction

Imposing measures intended to prevent births

Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

SOURCE: BBC

Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Last week, ahead of the verdict, Vukovar resident Kata Lozancic told Reuters news agency she believed genocide had taken place in her town.

"Everything from cultural and natural sites, to people, everything was destroyed," she said.

A refugee in Serbia, identified only as Dragica, expressed unhappiness at the Croatian government's claims. "They expelled us Serbs, and now they [claim] they are not criminals, and we are," she told Reuters.

Former Yugoslavia was a Socialist state created after World War Two. It consisted of six republics: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

The federation began falling apart in the early 1990s. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia declared independence, sparking conflicts with the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army. All four countries were eventually recognised as independent by the UN.

In 2006, Montenegro also emerged as a sovereign state after a referendum for independence, ending the former Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

Court orders

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The SC yesterday also permitted the government to move an appeal before it against a High Court verdict that acquitted the six in the case.

A four-member bench of the apex court passed the order after hearing two separate leave-to-appeal petitions filed by the government challenging the HC verdict.

Additional Attorney General Momtaz Uddin Fakir told The Daily Star that the six would have to surrender before the Special Judge's Court-3 of Dhaka in three weeks after receiving the SC order.

The National Board of Revenue on July 25, 2007 filed the case with the lower court against Bashundhara Industrial Complex Ltd, and its officials on charge of evading Tk 8.26 crore income tax between the fiscal years 2004 and 2007.

The Special Judge's Court 3 of Dhaka on September 30, 2007 sentenced Shah Alam and his family to eight years' imprisonment for evading taxes.

MM Kuddus, proprietor of Kuddus and Company, which audits the company's financial statements, was jailed for three years for assisting the company in dodging taxes.

The court also fined them a total of Tk 8.3 crore.

Following an appeal filed by Shah Alam, the HC in June 2011 scrapped their jail sentences and acquitted them of the charge.

Stop violence

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Founder of Gonoshasthaya Kendra, Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury said the government cannot avoid taking the responsibility of what is happening in Bangladesh today.

"The prime minister should immediately declare a mid-term election, while Khaleda Zia should withdraw blockade and hartals for the sake of the country, its people and democracy," he observed.

Zafarullah added: All the political parties should hold a dialogue to decide on the modalities of the election-time government and other issues concerned.

Badiul Alam Majumder, secretary of Shushashoner Janney Nagorik, said the government is solely responsible for ensuring peace and rule of law in the country.

"So the prime minister has to take the initiative first to end the deadlock," he said, adding that using excessive force to stop violence will not work. Rather, the crisis should be solved politically.

There is a possibility that the law enforcers would abuse power to harass people linked to the BNP and its allies, instead of brining to book the real culprits behind arson attacks and killings, mentioned Badiul.

Noted jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik said blockades and hartals are nothing but a manifestation of sick politics.

"We seem to be destined to suffer since we only have power-hungry politicians, but no statesman," he lamented.

Is The Starry

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extensions of his fragile state at the time.

But now an artist has claimed that the spirals actually depict galaxies in the universe, and were likely inspired by drawings of the cosmos at the time.

The claim was made by American artist and photographer Michael Benson in his new book, Cosmographics, reported PRI.

He says, it is a drawing of the Whirlpool Galaxy -- official designation M51a -- by Anglo-Irish astronomer William Parsons, 3rd Earl of Rosse, in the mid 19th century.

To observe the night sky, Lord Rosse built the largest telescope at the time with which he observed the galaxy and made his drawing.

"We believe that drawing led directly to Starry Night, the most famous artistic depiction of the night sky," said Benson.

"Either it was in the library of the asylum in the south of France, or he saw it in Paris."

At the time, van Gogh was in an asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in Southern France -- and the painting is a depiction of his view out of the window.

The technique of using swirls later appeared in many more of van Gogh's work -- although whether they were inspired by the Whirlpool Galaxy drawing or not may never be known for sure.

The Whirlpool Galaxy is about 23 million light-years away and is roughly the size of the Milky Way at about 60,000 light-years in diameter.

Interestingly, it was the first galaxy found to have a spiral structure -- although at the time astronomers thought other galaxies were nebulae, not galaxies.

It was not until 1922 that American astronomer Edwin Hubble first proved that our galaxy was just one of many, many more in the universe.

First defendant takes the stand in DSK pimping trial

AFP, Lille

The pivotal character in a French prostitution ring that landed former International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn in court for "pimping" was the first to take the stand in the trial yesterday.

Rene Kojfer, 74, former public relations manager for the luxury Carlton Hotel in the northern city of Lille, is accused of running a high-end prostitution ring that organised sex parties for local businessmen and police officials, often in his hotel.

It was during a probe into the so-called "Carlton Affair" that investigators stumbled across the alleged involvement of Strauss-Kahn, whose high-flying career and presidential prospects imploded when a New York hotel maid accused him of sexual assault in 2011.

Kojfer is accused of procuring prostitutes for then-police commissioner Jean-Christophe Lagarde, a fellow freemason who threw parties for Strauss-Kahn in Paris, Brussels and Washington, and is also among the 14 accused.

Strauss-Kahn said Monday he had never set foot in the Carlton.

"I saw them for the first time today," he said of Kojfer and notorious Belgian brothel-owner Dominique Alderweireld, known as "Dodo the Pimp", who employed the prostitutes that attended some of Strauss-Kahn's parties.

While his is only a small part in the multi-faceted trial, the disgraced 65-year-old former finance minister known in France as DSK -- is the star attraction at the austere courthouse in Lille. However he will not be in court again until he takes the stand himself next week.

Before then, Kojfer, Alderweireld and some of the prostitutes who took part in the debauched parties are likely to be questioned about their links to DSK's entourage, and his presence at the sex parties.

Bernard Lemaire, the chief of the four judges who will oversee the three-week, jury-less trial, read out the charges against Kojfer, who stood behind a stone podium, of organising and benefiting from the prostitution of eight women, some of whom attended the DSK orgies.

Isn't it what we call

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people have been killed and 153 others injured. Last night, 41 victims were making the air thick with their blood-curdling screams at the DMCH burn unit.

Do we really find any difference between al-Qaeda deploying its bombers to wreak mayhem and kill civilians as in Iraq, Pakistan and elsewhere, and a political party spurring its activists to bomb sleeping bus passengers to death?

If not, what we have been witnessing for the last one month -- the relentless killing of innocent citizens -- is nothing less than terrorism.

There is no international legal consensus yet to define terrorism. But the widely acceptable definition is: The use of violence or the threat of violence, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political goals. So, if we go by this definition, what we are now faced with is all but political agitation.

The country survived a spate of terrorism for close to two months, ahead of January 5 elections last year. But it was the Jamaat-e-Islami that earned the terror tag then for unleashing targeted attacks on police, public properties, and people, Hindus to be precise, over the war crimes trials.

Of tears, groans & fury

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Venting his anger on politicians, Poplu's brother Kamruzzaman Dablu said, "We don't want such politics that takes lives of our dear ones."

On the bus was another mother, Asma Begum, 35. On Friday, she had gone to her in-law's house in Noakhali with her two sons -- Shanto, 13, and Munna, 15. The next day, she took her eighth grader and ninth grader sons to Cox's Bazar on a holiday trip.

On the fateful night, she had been returning to her Narsingdi home from Cox's Bazar, family members said.

As the fire engulfed the bus, Munna jumped through the window, but Asma and Shanto could not make it. They were burned alive.

Zilqad Ahmed, 20, was all set to go to Saudi Arabia for a job. Before flying to the Middle East country, he went to Cox's Bazar with his three friends to have some fun.

But his trip to Saudi has become uncertain as he lay in severe pain at the DMCH with 20 percent burns in his face and the lower part of his body.

"We four friends were sitting on the fourth row of the bus, sleeping. I woke up to see myself on fire. I jumped through the window," Zilqad said.

He was lucky, as his friend Faruk Ahmed doused the flame on his body. In the process, however, Faruk suffered

Forty-two people were killed, 33 of them in arson attacks, and 345 injured then, but not many fingers were raised against the BNP, which was Jamaat's main ally and partner in the crime.

Now the BNP is also being accused of terrorism though the Jamaat and its student wing remain violent as before.

Police on Sunday arrested 16 activists of Jamaat's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, with explosives and bomb-making materials in Rajshahi and Feni. In 10 days till Saturday, at least 17 Shibir men were caught by law enforcers and common people before or after they carried out bomb or arson attacks on police or public transports.

The character of Jamaat-Shibir is well exposed. But what about the BNP?

Is not the BNP, which ruled the 44-year-old country for 15 years, now treading itself on a dangerous territory? Does it realise a terror tag can eventually initiate its political funeral?

The ruling Awami League should also not be happy at all with its rival's journey towards terrorism. The government has miserably failed to protect people.

The patience of people is going to fray sometime, someday down the line. Will this type of politics be able to survive people's rejection?

2 percent burns in his hands.

Zilqad's uncle Abdul Aziz Sarker blamed the BNP for the situation.

"Burning people can never be politics. We want the violence to stop immediately," he told this correspondent at the DMCH.

For the family of Arif Sikder, 26, the arson attack served a double blow. Second among four brothers, he went to Cox's Bazar to look for his younger brother, Sajib Sikder, who has been missing for the last one week.

The news of the launch capsized in the Bay of Bengal near Kutubdia had prompted Arif to go there, as his brother wished to go to Malaysia.

But he returned not only empty-handed but with 10 percent burns.

"Seeing violence on television, I told him to be careful," said his another brother, Sujon.

"My mother has almost stopped taking food after my brother went missing. After hearing this [Arif's] news, she fell sick. We did not dare to tell my elderly father about it yet," he added.

His brother-in-law Nazir Hossain Sikder said, "The two parties are doing politics and the innocents are paying the price. The ordinary people are dying every day because of them."

[Our Cox's Bazar and Narsingdi correspondents contributed to the story.]

New industrial gas links

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House, Bipu said all the illegal gas lines would be disconnected and "tough actions" would be taken against the culprits.

Replying to another query, he said 70 percent households of the country would have gas connections in three years.

Of the total gas production, 41 percent is used to generate power and the government was considering using coal instead of gas for the purpose.

The use of coal will be increased to 53 percent to generate 20,000MW of electricity by 2021, Bipu said.

He also claimed that "a slight increase" in the retail power price would not be a "burden on people".

"Rather, it'll will decrease the amount of budgetary support and power subsidies," he argued.

Several power distribution compa-

nies have placed proposals to Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission to raise electricity tariffs.

He said the production cost of per unit of electricity is Tk 6.33 while it was being sold at Tk 4.67. The government gave Tk 6,100 crore as subsidy for the power sector in the 2013-14 fiscal year.

On a different note, added the state minister said the government was examining whether fuel used by aircrafts could be sent to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital from Narayanganj through a pipeline.

He said the government would be able to save Tk 20 crore every year this way.

Responding to a question, Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu said the Board of Investment was working on a new policy for making foreign investment more effective for developing the country.